

NOTES AND NEWS.

WILLIAM H. BROWNSON, an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at his home in South Portland, Maine, September 6, 1909, after many weeks of illness, in the 55th year of his age, he having been born in Norridgewock, Maine, November 5, 1854. His father was the Rev. S. S. Brownson, a prominent Baptist clergyman, and a Scotchman by birth. Mr. Brownson, the subject of this sketch, was graduated from Colby University in 1877, and early directed his attention to journalism, and was for a long period connected with the Portland 'Advertiser,' holding the position of city editor for twenty-five years. He was also for many years a member of the school board of Portland, and in 1905 became superintendent of its schools, which position he held at the time of his death.

Mr. Brownson was actively interested in ornithology, a recognized authority on the local bird fauna of his region, and for some years editor of the 'Journal' of the Maine Ornithological Society, to which he was a prominent contributor. He also published popular articles on the birds of New England in the Portland 'Advertiser,' and frequently gave illustrated lectures on this subject before the Portland Society of Natural History and the Maine Ornithological Society. His loss will be severely felt, not only by these societies, in which he was prominently active, but by the city of Portland whose educational interests he efficiently promoted for many years.

THE new edition of the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds, which has been so long in preparation, is now in press, and its early publication may be expected.

As is doubtless known to many of our readers, the New York State Museum will soon publish a work on the Birds of the State of New York, by Professor E. Howard Eaton, who has for some years been engaged in its preparation. It will be in two volumes quarto, with numerous colored plates and text cuts. Volume I is announced as nearly ready for delivery; it will comprise over 300 pages of text and 42 colored plates; in addition to the generalities of the subject, it will include the species in systematic sequence from the Grebes to the end of the Pigeons.

MR. WILFRED H. OSGOOD has resigned from the scientific staff of the Biological Survey to accept the position of Assistant Curator of Mammalogy and Ornithology at the Field Museum, Chicago. He entered upon his new duties July 1, 1909. We trust that this will bring to him enlarged opportunities for technical work in zoölogy, for which he has shown such marked ability during his connection with the Biological Survey.

MR. ROY C. ANDREWS, Assistant in Mammalogy at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, is on his way to the Philippines to

join the scientific staff of the U. S. Fish Commission steamer 'Albatross,' and will make collections of birds and mammals and other natural history material during the cruise of the 'Albatross' in the East Indian Islands and northward to Formosa and the Batan Islands, in the interest of the American Museum.

MR. M. A. CARRIKER, JR., of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, who is well known for his work in Costa Rica as a collector of natural history material, left early in August last for South America to make collections of birds and mammals, and incidentally of insects and other special groups of animals. Beginning work in Trinidad, where he has been very successful, he will soon proceed to Venezuela, and thence westward across the continent to the Pacific coast, and southward to Bolivia. The trip is planned to occupy about three years, and to include many hitherto little worked localities. His birds will all go to the Carnegie Museum, and his mammals to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He left in manuscript an elaborate work on the 'Birds of Costa Rica,' on the preparation of which he had been long engaged, to be published soon by the Carnegie Museum.

AN EVENT of interest to ornithologists is the recent transfer to the new National Museum building in Washington from the old Smithsonian building of the Division of Birds. This change, so long looked forward to, will be of inestimable benefit at least to the younger members of the Division staff and their successors, and indeed to all who will in future have occasion to refer to the collections.

The new quarters of the Division of Birds comprise three rooms at the west end of the top floor; two communicating outside rooms, one 38 feet square (the office), the other, in which the egg-collection is to be stored, measuring 38 × 33 feet. These two rooms are well lighted and afford a fine view overlooking the grounds of the Department of Agriculture, Washington Monument, White House, and a wide sweep of the western horizon, bounded by the Virginia hills. Across a hallway from these two rooms is the storage room for bird skins, a range running east and west, about 32 × 145 feet in size, in which the 305¹ cases containing the collection are arranged in long rows, in single series. This room faces an open court with large windows all along the side, affording an abundant north light, while the opposite side is lighted by a row of large ground-glass transoms.

In September, 1884, the growth of the bird collection of the National Museum to 100,000 specimens was announced (*Science*, IV, 497). The number is now more than double that figure, the last entry in the catalogue being No. 212,069.

¹ Of these 305 cases 140 are "half-units," measuring 4×2½ feet, the remaining 165 being "quarter-units," 2×2½ feet, all being 40 inches high. The egg collection fills 70 additional quarter-unit cases.

The writer remembers as well as if it were but yesterday when the entire unmounted bird collection of the National Museum was contained in some three or four dozen tin herbarium cases arranged, book-like, on shelves in the middle room on the second floor of the north tower of the Smithsonian building, excepting the larger birds, which were packed in several old-fashioned wooden cabinets and cases with open drawers, mostly in the west basement. Sometime during the later "seventies" these were transferred to heavy glass-topped square wooden boxes and removed to the topmost room of the south tower, the Curator's office being the room immediately beneath. Several years later¹ (during the earlier or middle "eighties") the collection of smaller birds and the Curator's office were changed to the southwest open gallery in the main exhibition hall of the Smithsonian building, where they remained until the recent transfer. Here were held all the meetings of the A. O. U. Committee on Classification and Nomenclature except the first (and possibly the second), members of which are able to realize more than anyone else except the Curator and his assistants the extreme disadvantages under which all work pertaining to the Division of Birds has hitherto been done.

Members of the Union will benefit greatly from the change through increased efficiency of the Committee, which will hereafter be able, for the first time, to perform the ornithological part of its duties under circumstances calculated to yield satisfactory results.— R. R.

THE Bristol County Academy of Sciences has recently been organized and incorporated under the general laws of Massachusetts, for the purpose of promoting and encouraging "public interest in all branches of natural history and in the liberal and useful arts, and in the conservation of our natural resources." A museum will be formed to illustrate the local fauna and flora, with a laboratory for the use of members engaged in special research and experimental work; and a bureau of information is to be established in aid of naturalists, agriculturalists, etc., to give information and practical assistance in the suppression of insect pests, the improvement of shade and forest trees, the reforestation of waste lands, etc. A library and lectures will also be provided, and publications will be issued whenever the results attained or the welfare of the public seem to render it desirable. The officers are: President, Henry F. Bassett; Vice-Presidents, Walter C. Baylies and Joshua E. Crane; Secretary, A. Cleveland Bent (Taunton, Mass.); Treasurer, Julius Rockwell; Curator, Frederic C. Carpenter.

AT THE annual meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union held in London in May last, a "new rule" was adopted to the effect that any member who "shall have personally assisted in, or connived at, the capture or destruction of any bird, nest, or eggs in the British Isles, by purchase or otherwise, likely, in the opinion of the Committee, to lead to the extermina-

¹ The exact dates of these changes cannot at this moment be ascertained.

tion or serious diminution of that species as a British bird," will render himself liable to have his name erased from the list of members without the assignment of any reason. He can, however, stand for reelection at the next annual meeting of the Union. Such radical measures, by an organization dominated by leading ornithologists, for the protection of waning species, indicates that ornithologists, as such, are not apathetic in the matter of bird protection.

FROM information recently published in 'The Emu,' it appears that the Lyre Birds of Australia are approaching extinction, having been killed for their beautiful tails, which are much sought after as an article of commerce. Steps have now been taken to prevent the total extinction of these beautiful birds, yet the slaughter is said still to go on. It is not long ago, according to Mr. S. W. Jackson, "that in a locality in the northeast of New South Wales a party of vandals organized a sort of Lyre-Bird 'drive'; surrounding a patch of scrub in which the birds were common, and setting fire to it, they shot down the unfortunate birds as they struggled through one pitiless ring of fire only to meet their death in another. Finally the tails were cut off and the bodies left to rot, much as the victims of Red Indian warfare are scalped and abandoned."

WE ARE glad to learn that important restrictions have been placed on the export of the plumage of "Birds-of-Paradise, Goura Pigeons, and Osprey" (Egrets), from New Guinea. An Act of the Territory of Papua, passed in October, 1908, renders it unlawful "to export or take, or send out of the Territory the skin, feathers, or plumage" of any such bird without the "written consent obtained beforehand" of the Collector or other principal officer of Customs of the Territory. Furthermore, on the 5th of June, 1909, the Governor General (William Humble, Earl of Dudley) of the Commonwealth of Australia, acting with the advice of the Federal Executive Council, issued a proclamation rendering unlawful the importation into the Commonwealth, of the plumage of any such birds except with the written permission of the Collector of Customs of the Territory of Papua. It is to be hoped that similar steps will be taken by other governments to check the export, and thus the wholesale slaughter, of 'plume birds,' not only in New Guinea, but in other tropical islands and countries.

THE Twenty-seventh Stated Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union will be held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, beginning on the evening of December 6, 1909. The evening session will be for the election of officers and members, and for the transaction of routine business. Tuesday and the following days of the session will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of scientific papers and will be open to the public. Members intending to present communications should forward the titles to the Secretary, Mr. John H. Sage, Portland, Conn., in time to reach him not later than December 2.